

QUESTION RE ARABS
EZEKIEL 38 AND 39

by Willis E. Bishop

A question was asked about the Arabs. That is a very involved situation concerning the Arabs today and in the future. There are several reasons. Most Arabs are Muslim but some are nominal Christians. Among the Muslims there is a strong division. Some belong to one group called the Sunni ["Sunna" in the dictionary] Muslims and others belong to the Shiite group, and they somewhat hate each other. It is a distinction you find, for example, between Iran and Iraq. They belong to separate groups of the Muslims and therefore they are somewhat at odds with each other. Then the Arabs border other nations which may be involved in the final conflict. So it is a bit difficult to determine where the Arabs will fit in.

Then there are the Kurds who are sometimes in favor of Turkey and at other times in favor of Iran. Some even believe, and perhaps legitimately so, that they are not Arabs at all but that they are Jews. So that is involved in the question as well.

Probably the nearest that I know to answer the question is found in Ezekiel 38 and 39. We studied Ezekiel some time ago but we did not go into all the details of this. If we were to give a title to the analysis we are about to make it would probably be "The Russian-Arab-Muslim Story Out of Ezekiel Chapter 38."

Ezekiel 38 and 39 are tied in together and so the question we ought to answer first of all is "When will the events of these chapters take place?" Turn to chapter 38, verse 11: You will say, "I will go up against a land of open country [or unwallled villages]. I will go to them that are at rest, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls and having neither bars nor gates."

That describes Israel at that particular time, living in unwallled villages, resting at peace, and dwelling safely.

Then in verse 8 of chapter 38: "After many days you will be visited. In the last of the years you will come into the land, brought back from the sword and gathered from many people. The mountains of Israel ..."

That will take place in what is called "the last of the years."

Then in Ezekiel 39, after the invaders are destroyed, we read in verse 25: "Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob and have mercy on on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for My holy name."

That is, not all of Israel will be back in the land when Ezekiel 38 and 39 take place. At the end of the years, when Israel is dwelling safely, and when all of Israel will not yet have been brought back. In Matthew chapter 24, when the Lord comes back at the end of the Tribulation period, He sends out His angels and gathers the elect

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from the four corners of the Earth to complete the return of Israel to the land.

The situation is something like this. First there is the rapture of the Church (I Thessalonians 4; I Corinthians 15) in which believers, living and dead, are caught up to be with the Lord. Sometime after that there begins a period which we know as the Tribulation period - a period of seven years. That period begins, according to Daniel chapter 9, with the signing of a peace covenant between the majority of the Jews and the Antichrist. And so for a period of time Israel dwells safely. Then at the middle of the seven-year period the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple, shows himself to be God, and the Jews say, "We just can't take that." They break that covenant, and for the latter part of that seven-year period the Jews are in real trouble.

The only time that I can see in the future when Israel will be dwelling securely, in unwallled villages, etc., would be in the first half of the Tribulation period. So it seems to me that Ezekiel 38 and 39 fit somewhere in the first half (first three and a half years) of the that period.

Q. If the Antichrist is going to set himself up in the temple, will the temple have to be rebuilt?

A. That indeed is true. There are two future temples: one which will be in operation during the Tribulation period; and the other which will be in operation during the Millennial period, and that will be a totally different temple.

Q. Is there any indication of who the Antichrist will be at that time?

A. Later on in the book of Daniel I think I can show you that he will come out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's [The Great] empire that was broken up. I don't think it is Rome at all.

C. He can't be revealed until the Holy Spirit is taken away.

A. We can at least know something of his origin, and I think Daniel is clear that out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's empire the Antichrist will come. I also think that Micah indicates that he will be an Assyrian. But we can't be dogmatic about that.

The people involved. Ezekiel 38:2: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him."

Lexicons and history buffs and so on do not identify these as clearly as I wish we might be able to do. But I want to attempt to do that.

In other words, you don't say "Meshech represents Moscow"; you don't say that Tubal represents Tobolsk simply because they sound alike. They have no relationship to Moscow and Tobolsk. And the "chief prince" - "chief" is the word for "Rosh" and some say that is Russia, but it is an entirely different spelling from "Russia." So we should not get Russia involved at this point.

The best we can do with "Magog" is that he is from somewhere between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. [Pointing on the map. Here is Russia - of course that is all broken up now but I think some of it will be involved. The area is the southern part of Russia where Gog and Magog would be involved; Armenia (where there are Arabs who are nominal Christians), Azerbaijan, Georgia, the southern tip of Russia - they will be involved in this invasion.

Others are involved, in verse 5: "Persia [present Iran], Ethiopia [Hebrew is Cush, which involves the territory of Ethiopia and the Sudan], Libya [along the northern coast of Africa].

Verse 6: Gomer [that is not Germany - that is the eastern part of Asia Minor between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea], Togarmah [in eastern Turkey - Notice there is a definition that follows] the far north [or the remotest part of the north].

From Israel the remotest part of the north is in Russian territory. So I believe that not only these other countries, but also some of what is left of the Russian empire will be involved, providing it takes place reasonably soon.

C. That will bear out the fact that Russia will not be a world power after this.

A. I am not sure just how strong they will be. Right now Russia is involved in helping some of these other countries, such as Iran, to prepare weapons, to helping Syria in their preparation, and they now have SCUD missiles which will reach from the Beqa Valley in Syria, not only to Jerusalem but all the way down to the Red Sea. They have enough of them that they can send them all at once and cover that whole territory.

Q. Is that when they are destroyed in the mountains?

A. That is in the middle part of Ezekiel 39.

In verse 11: "And it will come to pass in that day that I will give the Gog a place there, a grave in Israel, the valley of those who are in the east front of the sea, and it will be so that the travelers passing through will bury them. And there they will bury Gog and all his multitude, and they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog."

Notice verse 12: "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land ..."

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Verse 14: "They will set apart men of continual employment to pass through the land and bury the bodies remaining to cleanse it."

They will face a tremendous slaughter at that time, but the invasion is the terrible event that is sometime ahead. If I have come anywhere near identifying the territories involved, they represent Russia (in part) and the Arabs and the Muslims. [Not all Arabs are Muslims.]

Q. re the killing.

A. The killing takes place because the Lord intervenes. For example, in chapter 39, verse 5, speaking against the invaders: "You shall fall on the face of the field, as I have spoken ... and I will send a fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."

The Lord intervenes, perhaps supernaturally. It isn't that Israel will not attempt to protect itself - it probably will, and they no doubt have nuclear weapons at the present time.

There is another group involved. Ezekiel 38, verse 13: "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish,

[There is difficulty in identifying these areas. You remember the Queen of Sheba. It is believed that she came from somewhere in Arabia; Dedan is either a district in Arabia or south of Edom; and Tarshish has all kinds of identifications - whether that is Spain or just a distant territory, or what. But here are some nations or peoples who object in a very mild way.]

and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your company to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?'

That was probably one of the purposes of the invasion. But here are some countries and people who object in a very mild way. Some will ask, "Where is the United States?" I don't know - perhaps I had better not speculate. I don't know that the above answers the questions satisfactorily, especially about the Arabs. But I believe they will be involved in that invasion..

C. God told Abraham that because of his relationship with Hagar his descendants would be in trouble.

A. That's a biblical reference. Ishmael was to be a wild man in the presence of his brethern. The descendants of Esau also will be in conflict with the sons of Israel.

I have one or two other things. This is sort of a side issue.

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Luke 21:24: "And they will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led away captive to all the nations. [Now notice] And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Most begin the "times of the Gentiles" back when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. I won't argue about that, but I think the tense is future [from the time this was spoken] - "Jerusalem will [in the future] be trampled by the Gentiles." I think the "times of the Gentiles" began with 70 A.D. However, I am more concerned with the time of the end. Jerusalem will be trodden by the nations "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

In June 1967 you remember the thrilling story about Israel taking over in a sovrein way the city of Jerusalem.

That means, verse 32: "I say to you this generation will by no means [double negative] pass away till all things come to pass."

In my thinking, sometime within a generation after June 1967 things are going to come to a real head. How long is a generation? I don't know. That is part of the problem. Some claim it is 40 years. But in earlier civilization it was only 20 or 30. In some places in the world it is still that. It is hard to determine just how long a generation is. But it encourages me to look up, because before this takes place, the Rapture [of the Church] will also take place.

The "Intelligence Digest" is a news publication in the United Kingdom and is supposed to be the best news-gathering agency in the world. I am interested in their quotations, and here is one that appeared in September 1997. They predicted: "Intelligence received in this office during the past few weeks points to a greatly reduced time frame in the Middle East. There is now evidence to support the view that the next, the final Arab-Israeli war could come as early as the second half of 1998." It may not take place quite that soon, but it could. They give a number of reasons for that prediction. But I say that that excellent news-gathering agency believes that an Arab-Israeli conflict is not very far off. So what do we do? Look up, for our redemption may be drawing nigh.

That is not a complete handling of the question, but I present it for your study.